

Conference Session

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The title of the session, by recalling the term heritage, proposes a critical re-reading through the insertion of the "(M)," which both expands and problematizes the very notion of heritage. The "M" refers to memory, acknowledging heritage as a site for the construction and transmission of collective memory; it recalls the human and communal dimension upon which it is grounded; it evokes maintenance as an ongoing practice of care; and, finally, it suggests modification as an intrinsic condition of every historical reality. The suspension implied by the parentheses thus foregrounds the tension between permanence and transformation, between inheritance and project, in which heritage—understood in its dynamic dimension—becomes a space of shared responsibility and critical reflection. Within this framework, the historic urban landscape represents a particularly significant field of inquiry, in light of the environmental, social, and existential dimensions that, since the post-World War II period, have been widely acknowledged as inherent to inhabited space. Moving beyond the notion of a mere aggregation of monumental landmarks, such heritage should instead be understood as a stratified system in which minor architecture and public space are called upon to address contemporary needs while respecting their historical values. This perspective entails replacing the traditional conservation-oriented approach with more up-to-date integrated strategies, in which protection and transformation converge toward design solutions that respect the identity of places and are capable of counteracting the pervasive dynamics of exclusion affecting resident communities. Building upon the significant body of knowledge developed within the disciplines of Urban History and Restoration Studies, it appears both timely and necessary to continue a critical reflection on the processes of interpretation, conservation, and modification of historic centers, beginning with their urban and social dimensions. This involves recognizing their collective values and vitality, while placing at the core of the project the communities that inhabit them. When regarded as a whole and as an authentic and unrepeatable unicum—without losing sight of detail, yet without becoming overwhelmed by it—these contexts may attain a renewed contemporary dimension that is both respectful and sustainable. On the basis of these premises, the session invites contributions addressing the following themes:

Tools for assessing current conditions and the landscape, architectural, and functional transformations of historic centres;

Strategies and virtuous operational practices for the protection, enhancement, and accessibility of historic centres, with particular attention to the widespread historic built environment and public space;

Methodologies and techniques for the restoration of historic buildings, examined through multidisciplinary expertise and perspectives;

Case studies exploring the dialogue between old and new, in keeping with the notion of "continuous history"